

Recreational Fishing and Fisheries Management

Marine recreational fishing, or angling, is an important activity to many residents in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Many people fish for food and recreation, and “fishing tourism” is an important part of the Caribbean economy. However, like many popular human activities, angling can have significant impacts on the resource. Fishery managers must understand the activities of Caribbean anglers if they are to ensure quality marine angling for future generations.

Although the activity of a single recreational angler is not likely to be significant, the combined activity of millions of anglers represents a **tremendous** amount of fishing effort.



Understanding the biological impact and social importance of Caribbean angling is a vital part of the management process because it helps decision-makers develop wise policies.

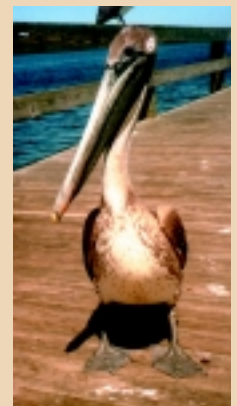
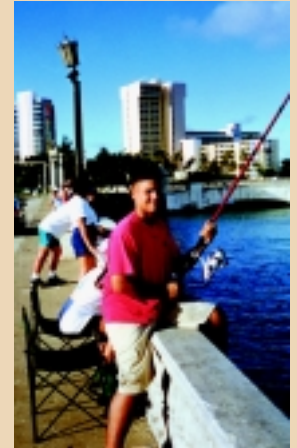
To properly manage fishery resources and continue to provide quality marine angling, fisheries management must gather reliable statistical data. This data includes the number, length, & weight of fish harvested, the composition of the catch, the numbers of people fishing, and the total number of trips that they make.



Of equal importance is social and economic information about the participants themselves. By knowing your age, gender, annual income, and amount of time and money spent angling, managers can develop innovative programs to manage the resource while minimizing the impact of regulations. Although these questions are sometimes of a personal nature, they help managers understand how policy decisions affect anglers, the recreational fishing industry, and coastal communities. Although the Caribbean is not scheduled for social and economic data collection in 2000, it is hoped that this data will be collected in the future.

The MRFSS

Beginning in January 2000, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) will begin collecting recreational fishery data in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Data will be collected through the Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey (MRFSS), which has been conducted in the continental U.S. since 1979. Through a partnership with the Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (PR-DNER) and the Virgin Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife (VI-DFW), field data will be collected at 113 access sites in Puerto Rico and 143 access sites in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Access sites are distributed among shore, boat ramp, marina, and for-hire charter sites. The NMFS is providing base level funding to support MRFSS sampling in the Caribbean, and the Puerto Rico DNER will contribute staff and money to increase their sample size. Both the PR-DNER and VI-DFW are contributing their experience and knowledge of local recreational fisheries to maximize the efficiency of the Caribbean survey. In 2000, well-trained personnel will complete approximately 6,000 field surveys in Puerto Rico and 2,000 field surveys in the U.S. Virgin Islands.



How Will the Data be Used

The MRFSS will provide essential data to the Caribbean Fishery Management Council, the PR-DNER and the VI-DFW. Resource managers will use the data to improve stock assessments, study species life cycles, and make regulatory and allocation decisions. The data can also be used in ways not directly related to fisheries management.

- *It can help managers forecast demand for new piers, marinas, and boat ramps, and to locate these facilities where they will be most useful.*
- *It can contribute to damage assessments for oil spills, pollution, and other accidents that degrade recreational fisheries.*
- *It can contribute to the planning of habitat conservation and restoration strategies important to fishery resources.*



Your Participation

As an angler, you can play an important role in Caribbean fisheries management. Your cooperation with MRFSS interviewers will help ensure that Caribbean angling remains a productive and rewarding experience. For more information about the Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Program, visit our website at www.st.nmfs.gov/st/recreational.

Good Luck and Great Fishing!!



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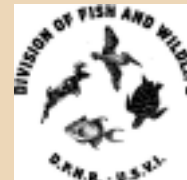
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Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey (MRFSS)



*Puerto Rico
&
U.S. Virgin Islands*



www.st.nmfs.gov/st1/recreational/